

1. **Project Title:** French Property Preservation Project
2. **Entity/Individual nominating the project:** St. Tammany Parish Government
3. **Contact Information:**

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4. **Tier 1 Designation/Tier 2 Designation**  
**Total CIAP Funds Requested:** \$1,500,000.00
5. **Parish CIAP Funds Proposed:**
  - a. Tier 1 \$1,500,000.00
  - b. Tier 2 \$750,000.00
6. **State CIAP Funds Requested:**
  - a. Tier 1 \$0.00
  - b. Tier 2 \$750,000.00
7. **Infrastructure Funds Proposed:** N/A
8. **Description and Location of Project:**

St. Tammany Parish Government seeks to acquire a 39.5 acre parcel (herein referred to as the French property) owned by Mr. James Fenner and Mrs. Flora French. Composed of pine trees and mixed hardwoods with inclusional savannas, the property lies between the I-12 Service Road and Bayou Liberty in Slidell, Louisiana (Figures 1 & 2). A Gulf South natural gas pipeline is within the boundaries of the property. The pipeline runs parallel to the western margin of the property and crosses Bayou Liberty (Figure 3). The Parish Government will grant easements for increased access to this critical natural resource.

One of the Parish Government's missions is to educate the public about the value of wetlands. To accomplish this goal, a series of interpretive signs that display native fauna and flora, the rate of wetland loss, and unique features of native Louisiana habitats will be placed along a network of trails. Additionally, Parish workers and volunteers will remove invasive plant species and install nest boxes within the property to increase native vegetative cover and enhance the number of cavity-nesting birds.

The Parish Government has applied for property acquisition funds from the Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP). Should the Parish Government receive these funds, the grant will be utilized to implement this project. If the Parish is not

successful in securing CELCP funding, the CIAP grant will then be utilized to acquire the French property, as well as implement selected portions of the project.

**9. Project Type:**

Conservation, restoration, and protection of coastal area, including wetland.

**10. Project Justification:**

**a. Is the proposed project free of issues that may impact timely implementation of the project features?**

Yes. At St. Tammany Parish Government's request, the Trust for Public Land has entered into an option agreement with the French family to acquire the property and hold it for the Parish under a lease-purchase agreement until funding is secured and the obligation is met. Because the acquisition logistics have been ironed out, the Parish feels the project is free of issues that may impact a timely implementation.

**b. Is the proposed project linked to a regional strategy for maintaining established landscape features critical to a sustainable ecosystem structure and function?**

The Parish Government has implemented a conservation program that includes the acquisition of critical and sensitive parcels within a wildlife corridor (Figure 2). On a larger scale, a riparian corridor will extend the entire length of Bayou Liberty and Bayou Lacombe thus connecting Big Branch Marsh National Wildlife Refuge with the Abita Creek Flatwoods (The Nature Conservancy) and the Bogue Chitto National Wildlife Refuge core reserves (Figure 4). This corridor will expand approximately 38 miles and cover a vast array of habitats from brackish marsh to upland pine savannas.

**c. Does the proposed project protect health and safety or infrastructure of national, state, regional, or local significance? N/A**

**d. How cost effective is the proposed project? N/A**

**e. What is the certainty of benefits resulting from implementation of the proposed project?**

The proposed project has a high degree of certainty of benefits. Acquisition of the French property will generate important ecological and educational benefits. The Parish Government will educate the public about conservation practices through a series of interpretive programs that emphasize native Louisiana habitats. Terrestrial and aquatic wildlife will benefit through improved species dispersal and foraging area within the corridor. Furthermore, native vegetative cover will proliferate after invasive plants are removed.

Moreover, the owner of the natural gas pipeline will be granted increased access to this natural resource.

**f. Does the proposed project address an area of critical conservation/restoration need or high land loss area?**

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, St. Tammany Parish is the fifth largest parish in the state and has been the fastest growing parish in Louisiana since the 1970's. Currently, the Bayou Liberty and Bayou Lacombe Watersheds are under increasing pressure from residential and commercial development (Figure 5). In 2002, the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation reported that urbanization in St. Tammany Parish has occurred at a rate of 2,699 acres a year. At this growth rate, urban areas will occupy over 138,000 acres or 1/5 of the Parish by 2025 and almost 1/3 of St. Tammany by 2050. During the study period, more than 52,000 acres of wetland habitat was lost. In response, the Parish developed a regional conservation plan that includes the acquisition of critical and sensitive parcels within the Bayou Liberty and Bayou Lacombe riparian habitat zones (Figure 4).

The wetlands of St. Tammany Parish suffered a devastating blow from Hurricane Katrina on August 29, 2005. The hurricane caused massive tree damage, soil erosion, and increased the transport of non-point source pollutants into our many bayous and streams. Recent satellite imagery illustrates that nearly forty square miles of wetlands within the Lake Pontchartrain Basin were lost during the storm event. The Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry has estimated that over 60% of the standing timber within the Parish was severely damaged and the Louisiana State University Hurricane Center reported that the forest canopy opened to at least 50% of its former tree cover. This one day event exceeded the amount of wetlands the Lake Pontchartrain Basin lost to natural erosion processes from 1990-2000. As wetlands provide our first line of defense for hurricane storm surges and help to minimize flooding, the Parish is committed to restoring these critical coastal resources and protecting the wetlands that remain. The acquisition and maintenance of land within these critical wildlife corridors will prevent further urbanization within this high growth region.

Wildlife must utilize the bayous and streams to move through the watersheds, from the pine uplands to the coastal marshes along the shore of Lake Pontchartrain, assessing different habitats for food sources and cover. Bayou Liberty is a rare "blackwater" tannic forested habitat that is home to a number of species of concern, including two endangered species, the Red-Cockaded Woodpecker and Louisiana Quillwort. The pristine habitat of Bayou Liberty merits protection for its wildlife.

**11. Project cost share:** In-kind services

The Parish Government will administer all phases of planning which includes recruiting local volunteers (i.e. Friends of Louisiana Wildlife Refuges) to help install nest boxes and

plant native vegetation. Moreover, the Parish Department of Public Works and volunteers (i.e. Boy Scouts) will conduct all necessary maintenance.